

# TRAVEL

## SHARE YOUR COOKING CLASS STORIES

In her story *Slow Food, Fast Cars*, **Lisa Kadane** writes about pasta making lessons in Bologna. Have you taken cooking lessons on a vacation? How was it and did you try making the dish when you returned home? Let us know at [dpottinger@postmedia.com](mailto:dpottinger@postmedia.com)

VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2022

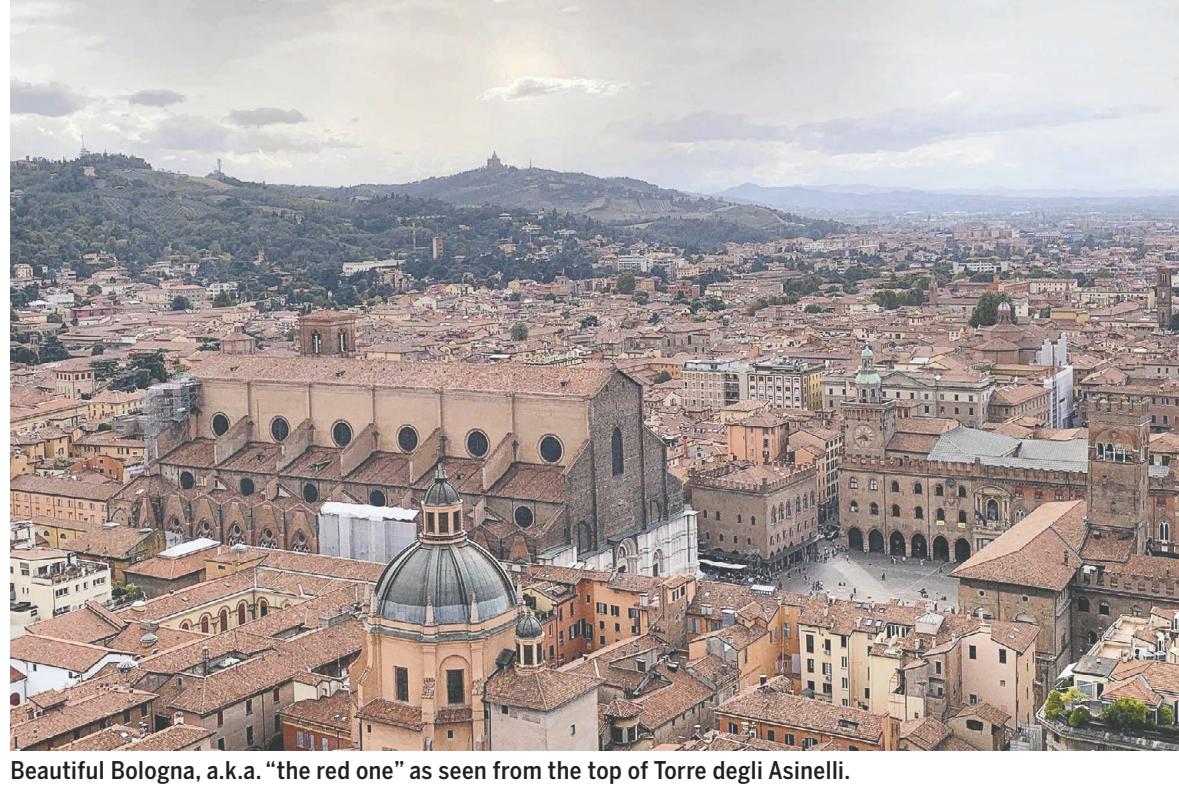
SECTION D



A bodega in Bologna selling ham, cheese and fresh pasta. Be sure to pack your appetite if visiting the city. PHOTOS: LISA KADANE

# SLOW FOOD, FAST CARS

Why Emilia-Romagna is Italy's next 'it' destination



Beautiful Bologna, a.k.a. "the red one" as seen from the top of Torre degli Asinelli.

**"The quality of the ingredients here ... you can't find this in the U.S. It's been on my list to come here for a while."**

**LISA KADANE**

From the top of Bologna's famous leaning tower, it was easy to understand the city's three nicknames — the red one, the learned one, and the fat one.

Red, because in every direction terracotta-tiled roofs and crimson stuccoed buildings stretched to the horizon. Learned, because of the view of the University of Bologna, the world's oldest — dating from 1088 — where Divine Comedy poet Dante Alighieri studied. And fat, because after just two days in Italy's gastronomic capital I'd probably gained five pounds in prosciutto and parmesan reggiano.

Huffing up the 498 steps to the top of Torre degli Asinelli felt like entering one of Dante's infamous circles of hell. But heaven was waiting on my way back down, where a glass of smooth Sangiovese and a plate of rich tagliatelle al ragù awaited.

Beautiful Bologna and the surrounding countryside — known as Emilia-Romagna — isn't as well known as its neighbour Tuscany. Tourists often pass right through on the train between Venice and Florence, unaware that the birthplace of ragù Bolognese and sweet, fizzy Lambrusco wine is just outside the train carriage.

But local wineries like Umberto Cesari and gourmet enterprises like Italy Food Nest want to raise the region's profile so more travellers will come to try the fermented grapes and tiny pockets of tortellini, and stay to explore the porticos and piazzas. Fortunately, I arrived with a healthy appetite.

I started my gustatory odyssey on a walking tour with Secret Food Tours. Guide Gabriele Comida led our small group through a labyrinth of cobble streets in Bologna's old town, past market stalls selling fresh peaches and plums, into bodegas heavy with the pungent aroma of aged cheese, and beneath the lofty porticos that unfurl for miles.

He explained that Emilia-Romagna has the highest number of certified food products of any region in Italy, from ham and cheese that originate in Parma, to balsamic vinegar from Modena.

"We need to guarantee the au-

### IF YOU GO

**Stay:** The boutique Hotel Metropolitan Bologna is located in the heart of old town, a close walk to Piazza Maggiore, Basilica di San Petronio, and the Two Towers. Modern, comfortable rooms overlook a courtyard and breakfast is included.

**Eat:** Almost anywhere you go will be amazing, but I loved the tagliatelle al ragù at Ristorante Il Moro, the cold cuts and cheese from La Salumeria, the tortellini al brodo (in broth) at F1 racer hangout Ristorante Montana, and the gelato from Cremeria La Vecchia Stalla.

**When to go:** Though not as touristy as Florence or Venice, Bologna is busy in peak season (and all of Italy is on holiday in August). September and October are ideal, with temperatures ranging from highs of 19 to 25°C to lows of 12 to 16°C.

thenticity of the product," said Comida, explaining the DOP ("Denominazione di Origine Protetta") system, which protects each product's designation of origin. Otherwise, the world would keep thinking that those green shakers of Kraft cheese powder are the real deal.

Our appetites piqued, we ducked into the basement of a wine shop to try local vino paired with chunks of parmesan reggiano, salty cuts of salami and culatello (basically, the pig's butt cheek), and thin slices of mortadella, a tasty concoction of Porky's ignoble parts. This delicacy was the first-ever certified food, way back in 1661, and it would come to be known around the world as "bologna." But the circular processed lunch meat many North Americans grew up on tastes nothing like Italy's authentic version.

"The quality of the ingredients here ... you can't find this in the U.S." said San Francisco Bay area foodie Tony Ratto, savouring the mortadella on a vacation with his wife. "It's been on my list to come here for a while."

SEE ITALY ON D2

"We need to guarantee the au-



Miles of porticos stretch around Bologna, offering shelter from the elements in this city rich in history and culinary delights. PHOTOS: LISA KADANE

## A PASSION FOR WINE & PASTA



Sangiovese grapes ready for harvest at Umberto Cesari winery.

### ITALY FROM D1

Emilia-Romagna's wine is just as good as the food, I learned the following day on a visit to Umberto Cesari. Perched like an Italian villa on a hill in the vineyard-dotted countryside southeast of Bologna, the winery specializes in Sangiovese and Pignoletto wines, whose grapes grow well in Romagna. (Lambrusco, the sweeter, fizzy red to try, is from Emilia.)

"Italians always have some wine on the table," said Gianmario Cesari, son of the late founder, as he showed us through the winery. He explained how his father purchased the best land for Sangiovese grapes back in the 1960s because he foresaw a great future for terroir-based wine in Italy.

The winery also grows Albana and Trebbiano, and international varietals including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc. And many Canadians are familiar with Umberto Cesari's marriage between Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon, the distinctive Liano.

"Our ultimate goal is to try to make wines that are a real expression of our territory, so you can tell the difference between a Sangiovese made in Tuscany and one made in Romagna," said Cesari.

My palate isn't that refined, but I loved the winery's range. From the bubbly Moma Pignoletto and dry Costa di Rosé, made from Sangiovese grapes, to the full-bodied Sangiovese Reserva and the in-your-face Tauleto, it all tasted like

Emilia-Romagna in a glass.

### THE ART OF MAKING PASTA

To taste the region on a plate, I attended a pasta class in the home of Cristina Fortini, founder of Italy Food Nest, a culinary company that hosts cooking classes and leads gastronomic tours.

Fortini showed our group of aspiring pasta makers how to knead dough with just two ingredients: double zero flour and eggs. I palmed the yellow ball like Play-Doh until it was smooth and elastic, then rolled it out on a flour-dusted wooden board with a "mattarello," which is a long, thin rolling pin. Last, we learned how to mould hat-shaped tortelloni, spool cylindrical, striped garganelli, and cut precise ribbons of tagliatelle.



Pasta makers, called sfoglina, twist fresh egg pasta dough into tiny tortellini at a pasta lab.

### Take a trip on the stormy side.



Photo credit: Nathaniel Atakora Martin

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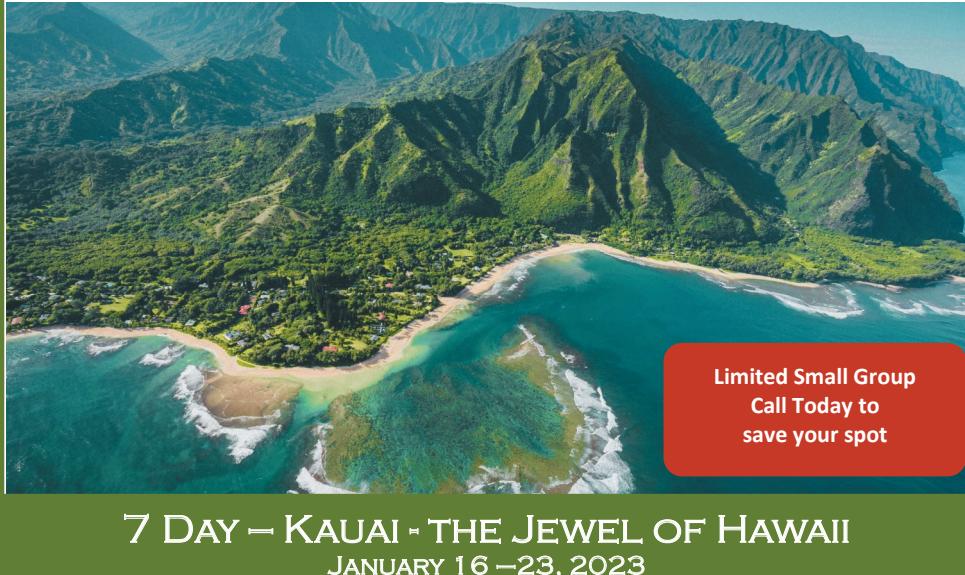
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It was a slow, almost meditative process, and worth the effort when we dug into the meal. Lively conversation and glasses of wine flowed, and I felt part of Italy's food customs.

"Making pasta is an expression of art for the Italian people," said Fortini, whose father taught her how.

It's not just teachers like Fortini or local nonnas making handmade pasta in Bologna, either. On the food tour we'd visited a pasta lab, where four "sfoglinas" (pasta makers) chatted in Italian while they rolled pasta into nearly translucent sheets, cut it into perfect squares, added pork and parmesano, then expertly twisted the packets into tiny belly-button-shaped tortellinis. The finished pasta would be sold to bodegas or restaurants.

"It's very rare to still find these labs in Italy," said Comida. "In Bologna, we do keep those traditions, so you're going to find fresh pasta in the restaurants."

From my first dinner at Ristorante Il Moro to my last at the traditional Da Nello, this was definitely the case.

#### FAST FERRARIS

On my final day in Emilia-Romagna I switched gears from food to fast cars.

The region is known as Motor Valley because so many famous sports cars are headquartered here including Lamborghini, Ducati, Maserati and Ferrari.

Both the Ferrari Factory and the Enzo Ferrari Museum are located in nearby Modena, and I couldn't resist the chance to drive a racy red Portofino with Pushstart Maramello.

"Push it! Push it!" Peppi, my driving instructor, encouraged me whenever I hit a straightaway. So of course I gunned the car up to 100 or so, at one point overtaking a Fiat at Peppi's behest.

We chatted casually as I zoomed past green fields and stone buildings. I learned that Peppi's neighbour in Bologna is none other than Olympic ski racer Alberto Tomba. Speed, I thought, must be in Italians' blood.

And so is attention to detail, whether the stitching on a Ferrari's interior, or the patience



A view of Canale delle Moline, one of Bologna's secret canals, as seen through a small window on Via Piella. PHOTOS: LISA KADANE

with which balsamic vinegar makers in Modena age their superb product for 12 or 25 years. I chased the Ferrari experience with a vinegar tasting at Acetaia Villa San Donnino, where I tried to wrap my head around putting that much effort into a product to merely drizzle it on trout, pork or vanilla gelato.

"Because of tradition," explained Bologna resident Fabio Bergonzini.

Since I couldn't afford to bring Emilia-Romagna's culture of fast cars with me back to Canada, I opted for a few samples of its slow food traditions instead: balsamic vinegar, a bottle of wine, a healthy chunk of real parmesan, and the art of making pasta.

In Bologna,  
we do keep  
those  
traditions,  
so you're going  
to find fresh  
pasta in the  
restaurants.



Pasta maker Cristina Fortini is founder of Italy Food Nest, which hosts cooking classes and leads gastronomic tours.

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